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CARNEGIE TECH WAR VERSE

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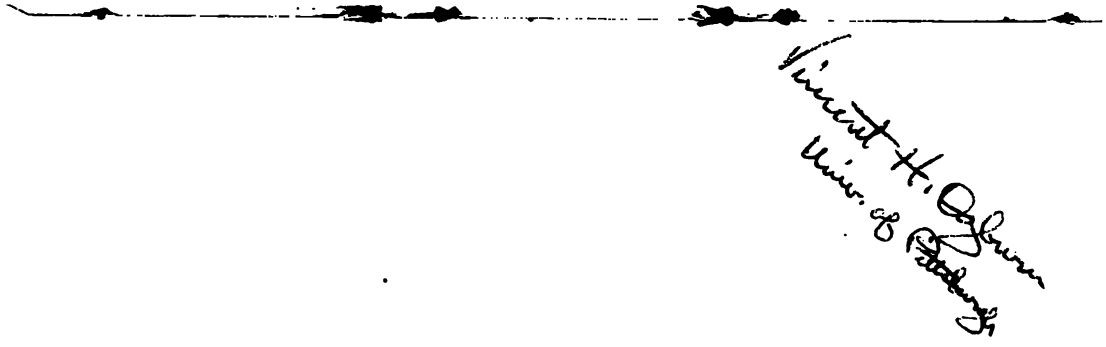
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WAR VERSE

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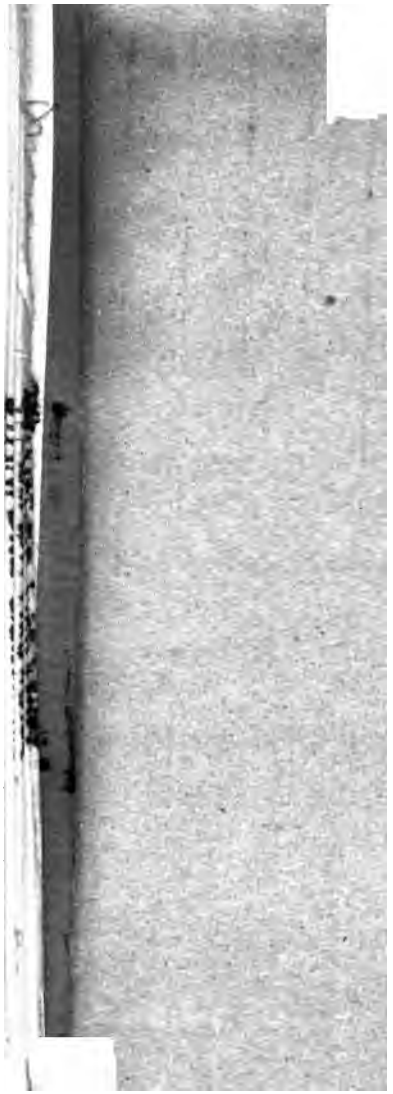

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FOREWORD

THERE have always been boys and girls who insisted on being poets. Why, nobody knows; but the phenomenon has a depressing effect upon those who feel that this is no world to be a poet in. Being a poet is a pretty risky way, one hears, of living one's life. But others regard it as a fine thing to be young and to be a poet. And to be young and to be a poet in an age when the world is vastly disturbed and there is a great fight to be fought for liberty,—such a destiny has seemed altogether glorious to-day in the eyes of many a young man and young woman. And to go forth and to die as a poet, what other destiny is like this?

Poetry, the language of the soul engaged with the fabulous, the beautiful, the tragic, beguiles us with the intimate sense it gives us of youth persisting through the grandeurs and desolations of the past, persisting always, so strangely, so softly, and indeed so shockingly. Youth is heroism, dauntlessness,

bewilderment, romance. As a person reads the poems of the past, he wonders whether people may not still be busying themselves in the world about him as they did in fascinating bygone ages. Perhaps even today some one steers a leaky vessel across uncharted seas, or picks up a broken sword upon a desperate field, or loses an empire for a kiss. Perhaps there are causes to be espoused, and banners to be flown, even crimson banners. Who can tell? The age is lost in the ages, and the most ordinary events assume an agitating import. To raise a thousand phantoms, to veil with strangeness or to gild with beauty the things of every day, to intimate mystery upon mystery until the gates of death itself seem pierced—such is the magic of poetry, and the reason why men hunger for it.

The poems in this volume came from a group of students in the school of the arts at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. Before the War these students were writing and dreaming. The war came, and scattered them. But they continue to write, and some of their songs came back to the deserted corridors and studios and rehearsal rooms of the school. For those who will sing no more, whose beloved faces

we may no longer see, may this book be a cry at parting, and a last salute.

Fragmentary undoubtedly, and with that lack of organization which is the virtue and the vice of an anthology, the poems are filled for us nevertheless with the hopes and fears of months of tremendous disquiet; and as we select and arrange them from the material at hand, our thoughts are thronged with the impressions of war-time, vivid and fugitive alike, and with many intimations of all that the War has meant to our generation and will mean to those who come after us.

To the lovers of poetry, through whose minds tide the movements of the present, we commend this volume, as tourists in a battered ancient city call to one another's attention some gleam of beauty by the way, or as voyagers after terrible days and nights on a strange ocean waken their exhausted fellows and point to a golden sunrise.

HANIEL LONG

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CARNEGIE TECH
WAR VERSE

The Little Folk

The little leaves, the little leaves,
I wonder if they know
The reason for the thundering
That makes them tremble so;
Or do they think the rain will come
And then a quiet sun?
Ah, many stormy days there'll be
Before the war is done.

The little birds, the little birds,
I wonder if they see
The reason for the bursting shell
That tears the nesting tree;
Or do they think the hunt is on,
And they must take to flight?
Ah, there'll be hunts on many hills
Before the world is right.

The little vines, the little vines,
I wonder have they found
Why yonder soldier lies so still,
And what has stained the ground;
Or do they think that wine is red,
And men who drink, drink deep?
Ah, many more shall drink with him
And he still lie asleep.

★ *Francis F. Hogan*

Memories

Written upon hearing of the death of his friend, Lieutenant Jack Wright, a boy of 18, who fell in an aeroplane accident in France.

It's a face in a crowd as you're passing by;
It's the turn of a head that will catch your eye;
It's a gay refrain that will make you sigh,
Memories—memories—we all must die.

The hotel lobby is gold and red,
And you catch yourself thinking of things he said,
And a girl comes near, with a turn of her head;—
He'd have liked her, too,—but he's dead.

So the flowers will grow by his grave some day,
And the world goes on with its work and play;
But I catch myself humming a song that's gay.
It's how he would like to have died—that way!

★ *Richard Mansfield, II*

Song

Where only the flowers would know us,
And only the bees could tell,
We lay all day in the long, cool grass
Where the wild plum's shadow fell.

Tho' only the slightest of gossamer
Was light as the web you cast,
There was never an ancient prison tower
Could bind a man so fast.

You left my limbs untrammeled
To go where the unknown lures,
You bound my heart with a silken hair,
My lips you sealed with yours.

These arms that have clung so tightly,
Do you feel their warmth to-day?
Do you hide with me a heart enchained
With a wound that bleeds in May?

★ *Francis F. Hogan*

O Sullen Sky, and Leafless Tree

O sullen sky, and leafless tree!
And brown field freezing fast!
But winter wind, you freeze not me,
For I am home at last.

At last, dear Home! My heart and I
Perpetual summer know.
Blow, icy blast! Within leaps high
The fire of love's own glow.

I kneel before the grateful flame,
And, shielded safe and warm,
Forget the weary way I came,
And feel no more the storm.

At home at last! At home to stay!
O mercy unsurpassed!
God grant all wanderers find the way
Into their home at last.

Oliver Wilkins

News From Home

It was six months since I had heard from home, and perhaps I expected too much.
—PRIVATE SMITH'S DIARY.

Strange, strange it seems when some new token comes,
Firm-lined and positive, unchanged to find
The life we lived, and living left behind;
The streets and minds unwashed; the life that hums
With dull, sad sins and petty loves and sums.
Limp, loveless hearts there are, yet not unkind,
And some slight threads of beauty there that bind
Ascetic mansions and voluptuous slums.
New lives, new lands, new loves are ever strange,
Fresh, fragrant days of poppy-colored dreams.
Old toils in lands unknown, themselves are new,
But stranger still that there should be no change,
Around old friends no mystic halo gleams,
That in one sky quickens no unknown hue.

Sirius

Prince Eitel Fritz

Prince Eitel Fritz, the Kaiser's son, upon a
summer's day
Came to a Belgian country-house where none
could say him nay.

Chorus

With a hey, and a ho, and away with every grief,
The Kaiser's noble son, my boy, is a devilish
noble thief.

He searched the house with thoroughness from
cellar to the ground,
And in the lady's boudoir he looked carefully
around.

He took the lady's lingerie—but the dame herself
had fled,
And so he went and stole, my boy, a heavy iron
bed.

And all the lady's necklaces, and all her diamond
rings,
He sent them to his mistresses with many other
things.

Chorus

With a hey, and a ho, and away with every grief,
The Kaiser's noble son, my boy, is a devilish
noble thief.

Sirius

Throughout the Ages

Darkness unfathomable;
The stiff, dry branches under me
Creak as I toss about;
A smell of dust, and musk, and sweat,
Loud breathing, as of animals asleep:
I shudder, and silently
Slip to the cave mouth.

Before me the forest slumbers,
And a stream tinkles down a far hill-side.
But above,
Like a danger signal in the night,
Mars flashes the blood-cry!

Back into the cave I slip.
The shaggy men stir—
They wake.
They lick their great chops,
And silently follow me
Through the star-lit forest
To the battle. . . .

With a start I awake.
Although it is still dark,
Reveille is sounding.
As I hurry to the tent door
I see the War-Lord still red
In the greying sky.
And I pick up my rifle
And join my comrades.

J. M. Wolcott

Fulfilled

Though my hands have not learned to model
The dreams of a groping mind,
Though my lips have not spoken their music
And are leaving no songs behind,
Think not that my life has been futile,
Nor grieve for an unsaid word,
For all that my lips might never sing
My singing heart has heard.

I have etched the light on a willow
With neither a plate nor style;
I have made a song of the crescent moon
And a poem of only a smile;
Are they less because lips could not know them,
These songs that my heart has known,
Am I wholly mute who have sung with my heart
And sung with my heart alone?

★ *Francis F. Hogan*

Thy uttermost is done.

I thank thee thou hast caught him in this space
And given him chance to hurtle those despairs
That make for poor nobility and mean disgrace:
I suckled him upon the blind sea spray,
I leaped with him full naked on the sand,
And trembled lest he learn a softer day.

Norn of Battles, bear him on
Unto a clean high death: for high stars stood
In bright communion when began
My sea-wild motherhood.

Sara E. Bennett

The Dreamer

The earth rocks—a castle falls.
The dreamer looks upon his ruined house in grief.
He had loved each stone, each bit of mortar
he had built into it.

He lies amidst the ruins weeping;
Each stone had been so beautiful,
So well cut and true.
Long had he planned it,
Long had built.

Then sees he a vision of a Mighty Mansion
Yet unfinished,
Shaped by the infinite Love and Power
Of an Infinite Dreamer.

Then he knows why the earth trembled.
His house had been too small;
Its one dweller himself.

So, the dreamer quietly gathers his stones again,
And builds anew.

Arleigh B. Williamson

A Munition Worker

I thought she was Aphrodite:
She strode among the others with a cold scorn;
Her throat was open, and her strong shoulders
Moved muscular beneath the cotton blouse.
Her lips were thin and unflinching.
But I thought her eyes might be tender—
Her contempt of weakness leavened with pity.

I admired her the more because her strength
was silence,
And when she spoke her words fell softly.

I wanted to give her the sea for a lover,
Or a storm-mad wind.

Sara E. Bennett

To a Dead Birdman

His Mother Speaks

I have laid you in a place of leaves
Marbled by the moonlight,
Calm, so calm, that my heart is silent in pain.
And—you have lain
So long—and so still.
The ivory disc of the moon is mute—
Silent, pursues its nebulous way—
And you lie,
With your bloodless lips closed
And your lashes long on your cheek,
And your hair spread dim on the grass
Asleep . . . . .
Will you tread now the ways of winds and stars
On your ghost-white wings?
Will they throne you on mountains of cloud,
mist piled—
Tempestuous child?
Ah, flower born of the dusk of dreams,

Blossomed to sway
Its own way in the wind,
My flower,
Fallen dead on the garden path,
Your mother is listening—listening still,
As though your white moon wings must wing you
away,
Listening—as though
It were not the part of creator to know
The created thing must go.

Sara E. Bennett

For King and Country

The king, he sits in his chamber high,
With a hundred faithful courtiers by . . .
What matter it if the soldiers die?
'Tis all for King and Country!

Outside is heard the bugler's blare;
The band is playing a lively air.
See how the burghers stop to stare . . .
'Tis all for King and Country!

What matters it if far away,
In the trenches, they're dying every day?
While they're dying, hear them say:
'Tis all for King and Country!

Over the wires comes the news,
That this is a battle our enemies lose—
But our men they die in the bloody ooze,
'Tis all for King and Country!

The king, he smiles that the news is good;
His men are dying for the lack of food—
But it doesn't matter—when understood
'Tis all for King and Country!

But for the mothers who weep, and for the babes
who cry
And for the girls who wait, and for men who die,
Led to their death by a noble lie,
There'll be a reckoning by and by!
To be met by King and Country!

★ *Richard Mansfield, II*

Shoes

I have a pair of soldier shoes,
And they are very, very neat;
A thousand spikes are in the soles
And on the heels an iron cleat.

Oliver Wilkins

The Sisterhood of Grief

In a blackened and desolate land,
Amid the ashes of their homes,
The women of the war lands
Have builded them a sanctuary.
Within its drear, grey walls they gather
And offer upon its purple altar
The Sacrifice of Renunciation.
These are the Sisters of Sorrow, consecrated by the flames of anguish;

And their Mother Superior
Is Mary, the Mother of Sorrows.

Oh, Women,
We come to your cold door,
Dreading to look within,
Yet longing to share with you the sacramental rites.
Is it written that we too shall know
The Pentecostal fire,

That we shall offer with you
The bitter sacrifice,
And then, our heads bowed,
Receive with you the benediction
Of Mary, the Mother of Sorrows?

Lucy A. Barton

The Old Cry

Give us an idol to worship,
Now we have cause to fear;
Let us believe he will lead us,
Then is our victory clear.

If he be hollow and crumbling,
If he have feet of clay,
Clothe him in purple and silver,
Cover his flaws for a day.

★ *Francis F. Hogan*

The Rover

Motor Transport

I used to ride the Bay Road from Saginaw to Flint,
And see the farms go skimming by, the windows gleaming bright
And the moon across the swamp lands, the fire-flies spark and glow,
And hear the cow-bells on the paths clink peaceful in the night,
And smell the clover meadows—but that was long ago,
When I used to ride with Annie down from Saginaw to Flint.

I used to ride the gay road that led to Pontchartrain,
And pass the quiet Creole towns—the cities of the dead,
With all the solemn lines of tombs—a-warning such as me—

And at the end of the gay road, the lanterns
flashing red,
The music ragging high and clear, the dancing
fast and free—
When I used to ride with Jeffie on the road to
Pontchartrain.

I used to ride the play road from the Bridge to
Rockaway,
Or tear through Coney when the lights would
dazzle high Apollo,
And see the Dreamland towers come up, and
Woolworth's fade and sink,
And splash along the beaches—call the sea-wet
nymphs to follow
Where the arc-lit foam and laughter glimmered
fair to make you blink—
When I used to ride with Dulcie from the Bridge
to Rockaway.

But now I ride the grey road across the hills in
France,

And all the night is blind and still, the lights are
dim and blue;
God knows how far we're like to go before the
morning mist,
And any screeching shell that flies may be for
me, or you . . .
And it's her you can remember, of all the girls
you've kissed,
That will ride with you the grey road across the
hills in France.

Sirius

Nocturne

A City Street Corner at Midnight

Like grey moths the people pass—
Grey, gay, fluttering they pass—
And the noisy cars blur past, and the horses, and
loud-voiced man,
Till suddenly the doorways yawn
And the solitudes begin.
The tall buildings wrap themselves in silence
And the river mists drift in.
I am alone—
Alone—as tho' a hurried wind had blown
The dust away, the dust of many faces,
The stirrings of many lives . . .
Gethsemane . . . . Shall I pray . . .
For the firm young faith that passed this way
Out to the war, to-day—
For those who watched and did not smile—
For the shadows that come to stay to-night—
For the wordless fears—

For the dead faces that cannot die . . . . How
shall I pray?
There is only the weariness of tears.

Sara E. Bennett

A Prayer Before Battle

A love of conquest lures us not,
Nor is revenge our vanguard's cry;
Nor tribal feuds, nor Hate's dark blot
Directs our Nation's policy.

Thou whom our fathers fought beside,
When they from tyrants freedom sought,
With our devoted hosts abide
Till its last battle has been fought.

★ *Lewis H. Boss*

Song of Vengeance

The night is dark,
There is no light—no light!
All the world is dark,
The night is dark . . .
It is no ordinary darkness, this.
Even the moon trembles and hides her face.
Pale, trembling moon, shivering behind warm clouds,
I do not blame you.
I, too, fear to look upon the sights you hide from.
Yet I must do it—for I am a man
And I must avenge!
Revenge! Revenge! That is a word I never knew till now.
Death and red blood seemed very distant once.
I have known love.
I have felt kisses soft upon my lips,
I have felt bodies warm against my own,
I have looked into eyes tender and lit with love,

I have fought boyishly, half-laughingly as I did so,
But this—this game of killing my fellow men is
new to me.
Still—are they my fellow men?
That is a question difficult of answer:
Are they my fellow men, these things, these Huns?
Partners all in a dance Macabre of lusty killing,
Rapers of women,
Breakers of oaths,
Butchers of babies—
I doubt it. .
If these are my fellow men,
Better the apes from whom they tell me I descend!

Yes, I will slay, and it shall be no crime,
For in this darkness I can see the eyes,
The eyes of virgins with their virtue robbed,
The eyes of heroes treacherously stabbed,
The eyes of hostages killed for their goalers'
pleasure,
The eyes of murdered children,

The eyes of boys who never shot a gun,
The eyes of aged women and old men,
The eyes of countless hundreds tortured to their graves,
Those eyes call out for vengeance!
They whisper eagerly to me in the quiet of my room;
They call out from the shadows when I walk abroad;
They gibber to me no matter where I go.
Vengeance! They claim it as their due.
Vengeance! It is their right, their wage.
Vengeance! If it is not theirs, it is not God's.
Vengeance! And we shall give it them.

★ *Richard Mansfield, II*

The Adventure

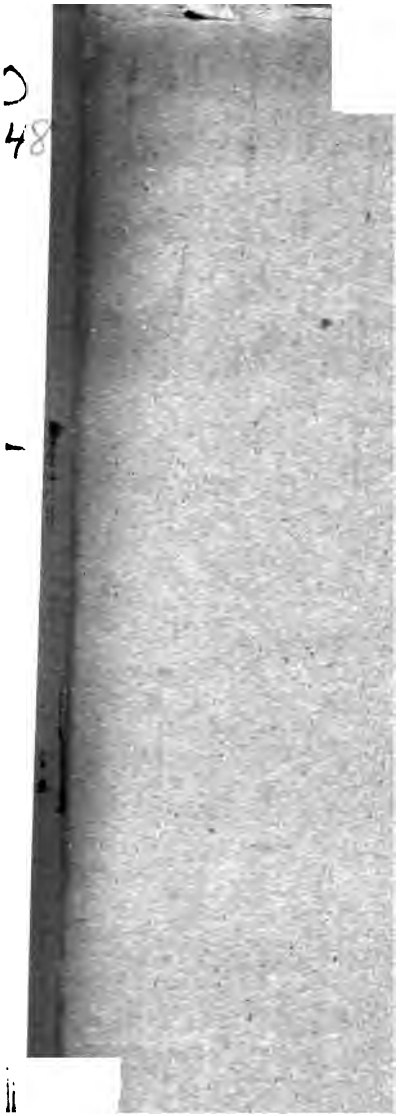
I have found a cave,
Dark and very deep;
Who may know what wonders
In the cannon sleep?

Maybe there are gems,
And a heap of gold;
Maybe sacred volumes
Stored there of old.

Maybe there are poppies
Which the gnomes hoard,
Bits of dragon skin,
And a broken sword.

Or a queen enchanted,
Whom we may free;
Maybe only Death;
Come, let us see.

★ *Francis F. Hogan*



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